New Forest Mercury Vapour Light Records for 1977

By L. W. Siggs*

Details for the catch of macrolepidoptera in the Robinson trap at Minstead for 1977 are as follows: —

	Nights	Specimens Total	Specimens Average	Species Average
March	31	2,830	91	7
April	22	1,383	63	6
May	21	150	7	4
June	30	375	12	8
July	31	3,400	119	27
August	27	3,011	112	29
September ...	30	2,238	75	19
October	31	672	22	9

The total number recorded from March to October inclusive was 14,059, a nightly average of 63, as compared with a total of 29,373 in 1976, a nightly average of 121, which I take to be an indication of the effects of the drought of 1976.

For the first time in 19 years there was no addition to the Minstead List.

The total number of species recorded during the year was 271. Hitherto the lowest record was 308 in 1975.

In view of the small numbers taken in 1977, it is not surprising that there were only 7 species showing a record catch. The number recorded (with the previous record in parentheses) were: *Idaea straminata* Borkh., 46 (27); *Xestia agathina* Dup., 28 (12); *Orthosia stabilis* D. & S., 2,425 (2,322); *O. munda* D. & S., 195 (192); *Xanthia aurago* D. & S., 48 (27); *Acronicta aceris* Frey., 17 (9); *Hoplodrina ambigua* D. & S., 197 (155).

The following species which are only occasional here were recorded in 1977: *Horisme vitalbata* D. & S., *Ligdia adustata* D. & S., *Deileptenia ribeata* Cl., *Drybotodes eremita* Fab.

Last year (*Ent Rec.*, **89**: 176) I wondered what would be the effect this year of the drought of 1976. I felt that young larvae, especially those which feed on birch and lichens, would probably die of starvation in infancy. It did not then occur to me that grass feeders would be equally at risk. The following list of species which showed a considerable fall in numbers, gives the 1977 figure with the figures for the peak year in past years in parentheses, and the months in which the larvae would be feeding. It will be seen that in nearly every case these months were those when the drought was having its worst effect. But there were a few exceptions. *O. fasciuncula* and *T. cespitis* feed on grasses, ova probably laid in the autumn but larvae are found 4-5. Reduction in numbers may be due to predation in the autumn as well as starvation. *Idaea dimidiata* feeds on withered leaves, of which there was no scarcity!

* Sungate, Football Green, Minstead, Lyndhurst, Hants.

Philudoria potatoria L., 1 (35) 5-6. *Drepana falcataria* L., 6 (67) 6-7, 9-10. *Habrosyne pyritoides* Hufn., 11 (312) 8-9. *Comibaena bajularia* D. & S., 3 (28) 7-5. *Idaea dimidiata* Hufn., 1 (38) 9-4. *Xanthorhoë spadicearia* D. & S., 7 (208) 6-7, 910. *X. ferrugata* Cl., 11 (279) 6-7, 9-10. *Chloroclysta siterata* Hufn., 1 (64) 6-8. *Dysstroma truncata* Hufn., 6 (156) 6, 8-2. *Thera firmata* Hübn., 1 (39) 4, 5-8. *Perizoma alchemillata* L., 1 (45) 8-9. *Plagodis dolabraria* L., 2 (109) 7-9. *Ourapteryx sambucaria* L., 4 (47) 8-6. *Peribotodes rhomboidaria* D. & S., 45 (275) 8-5. *Boarmia roboraria* D. & S., 2 (64) 8-5. *Laothoe populi* L., 2 (102) 7-10. *Stauropus fagi* L., 2 (75) 7-9. *Pterostoma palpina* Cl., 5 (43) 6-7. *Drymonia dodonaea* D. & S., 2 (63) 7-9. *Dasychira pudibunda* L., 5 (95) 7-9. *Spilosoma lubricipeda* L., 25 (218) 8-9. *S. luteum* Hufn., 53 (493) 8-10. *Axylia putris* L., 7 (308) 7-10. *Ochropleura plecta* L., 51 (1,697) 6-7, 8-9. *Noctua interjecta* Hübn., 3 (163) 9-5. *Diarsia mendica* Fab., 8 (109) 8-5. *D. rubi.* View., 22 (731) 6-7, 11-4. *Xestia c-nigrum* L., 37 (1,811) 9-5. *X. triangulum* Hufn., 6 (206) 8-5. *X. baja* D. & S., 9 (365) 9-5. *Discestra trifolii* Hufn., 5 (46) 7-9. *Polia nebulosa* Hufn., 3 (125) 8-4. *Melanchra persicariae* L., 1 (123) 7-9. *Lacanobia oleracea* L., 17 (250) 7-9. *Ceramica pisi* L., 1 (494) 8-9. *Tholera cespitis* D. & S., 9 (158) 4-6. *Mythimna pudorina* D. & S., 2 (208) 6. *M. impura* Hübn., 21 (285) 8-5. *M. comma* L., 2 (119) 8-4. *Rusina ferruginea* Esp., 13 (123) 8-3. *Apamea remissa* Hübn., 1 (28) 8-3. *Oligia strigilis* L., 4 (74) 7-3. *O. fasciuncula* Haw., 2 (50) 4-5. *Lithacodia pygarga* Hufn., 5 (202) 7-9. *Colocasia coryli* L., 8 (58) 6-9. *Diachrysia chrysitis* L., 4 (139) 6-7, 9-4. *Autographa jota* L., 1 (13). *Rivula sericealis* Scop., 5 (1,015) 8-5. *Hypena proboscidalis* L., 3 (101) 7-4. *Polypogon tarsipennalis* Treits., 1 (65) 7-3.

The figures for lichen feeders were: *Cybosia mesomella* L., 10 (120). *Miltochrista miniata* Forst., 1 (48). *Eilema sororcula* Hufn., 1 (but none in 1974, 5 and 6). *E. griseola* Hübn., nil (31). *E. complana* L., 26 (136), but not much down on recent years. *E. deplana* Esp., nil (21). *E. lurideola* Zinck., 59 (448). *Lithosia quadra* L., nil (20). *Laspeyria flexula* D. & S., 7 (111). The following species were entirely absent: *Thyatira batis* L., (17) 6-7. *Mimas tiliae* L., (2) 7-8. *Clostera curtula* L., (8) 5-6, 8-9. *Diacrisia sannio* L., (37) 7-5. *Nola confusalis* H.-S., (9) 7-8. *Diarsia brunnea* D. & S., (126) 9-5. *Lacanobia contingua* D. & S., (27) 8-9. *L. thalassina* Hufn., (77) 8-9. *Acronicta alni* L., (19) 7-9. *Apamea crenata* Hufn., (19) 8-5. *Amphipoea oculea* L., (21) 5-8. *Bena prasinana* L., (58) 8-9.

Migrants

A moderate year, but *M. vitellina* came again, and *M. albipuncta* turned up on the same night. *Plutella xylostella* L. (*maculipennis* Curt.) (12); *Nomophila noctuella* D. & S. (2); *Agrotis ipsilon* Hufn. (25); *Peridroma saucia* Hübn. (*porphyrea* sensu Edelsten) (1); *Mythimna albipuncta* D. & S. (1); *M. vitellina* Hübn. (1); *Autographa gamma* L. (338).

Polymorphism

Biston betularia L.		*Idaea aversata* L.	
typical	45 (86%)	*remutata*	177 (67%)
carbonaria	5 (10%)	*aversata*	87 (33%)
insularia	2 (4%)		

Xanthia aurago D. & S. ab. *rutilago* Fab. This is, I think, the most striking var. I have had in the trap. Tutt (1892) calls it "the form with the central area reddish orange . . . whilst Hübner's *rutilago* and his *aurago* are orange-red with purplish basal and outer areas". My specimen has the central area reddish-orange and the basal and outer areas purple.

Perizoma alchemillata L. A tiny specimen measuring 15 mm. across the wing-tips, compared with 19-22 mm. as quoted by Meyrick (1927). The rivulet is missing and the zig-zag part of the sub-terminal line at the apex only just visible. A victim of the drought, no doubt.

Ennomos erosaria D. & S. Pale form 12. Dark form 21.

Xanthia icteritia Hufn. Type 41, ab. *flavescens* Esp. 4.

Alcis repandata L. Type 35, f. *consonaria* Hübn. 2.

References

Meyrick, E. 1927. *Revised Handbook of Lepidoptera.*
Tutt, J. W. 1892. *The British Noctuae and their Varieties,* Vol. 3, p. 13.

Notes and Observations

THE BRITISH ORIGIN OF THE NAME OF "HUNTER'S BUTTERFLY": A CASE OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY SOLVED. — One of the more common and attractive butterflies in the eastern United States is the nymphalid *Vanessa virginiensis* (Drury). In recent years this close relative of the cosmopolitan *cardui* (L.) has been called the "American Painted Lady", but to many older entomologists who remember its long designation as *huntera* (Fab.) it is still "Hunter's Butterfly". The confusion over the identity of the butterfly's namesake is an interesting trans-atlantic problem in the history of common names.

No less an authority than the eminent W. J. Holland, author of books which guided amateur American lepidopterists for well over half a century (*The Butterfly Book,* 1898, and *The Moth Book,* 1903, both of which were reprinted a number of times) was completely misled in assuming this native butterfly to have been named after a "native son". In Holland's immensely popular *The Butterfly Guide* (1915 and later editions), a pocket-sized book which all of us of a certain present age carried as beginning collectors, the author stated: "We all know Hunter's Butterfly. How many know that its name commemorates that of a most remarkable American, John Dunn Hunter? Captured by the Indians in his infancy, he never knew who his parents were. He was brought up among the savages. Because of his prowess in the chase they called him 'The Hunter'. Later in life he took the name of John Dunn, a man who had been kind to him. . . . He went